MUNICIPAL DIMENSIONS

FCM

Submission to

THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

INTO

PART-TIME WORK

October 7, 1982

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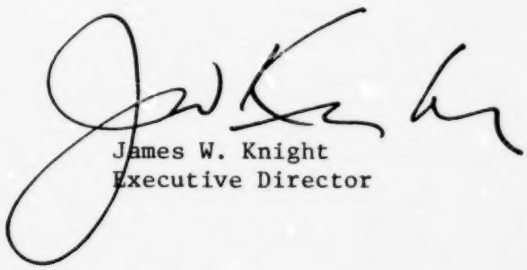
FOREWORD

The Federal Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work has now completed its fact-finding tour of Canada. The Commission's recommendations are expected in 1983.

Owing to the importance of part-time work in municipal government and to the potential cost implications of changes to legislation and regulations governing part-time work, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities submitted the following brief to the Commission. The brief was presented by the Federation's Second Vice-President, Alderman Doreen Lawson of Burnaby, British Columbia at the Commission's Hearing in Vancouver on October 7, 1982.

The Federation has taken a strong stand against precipitous action by the federal government or provincial governments on this matter. Any hasty changes to legislation or regulations have potentially large budgetary consequences which could affect the ability of municipalities to employ part-time workers and thus could further exacerbate Canada's unemployment problem.

This issue of *Municipal Dimensions* is the first in a series of ongoing publications which will be circulated by the Federation's Research Department.



James W. Knight
Executive Director

SUBMISSION OF THE FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES
TO THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO PART-TIME WORK IN CANADA

1. INTRODUCTION

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is pleased to make this presentation to the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work.[1]

a) The Federation of Canadian Municipalities

The FCM was founded in 1937 and for 45 years has represented municipalities of all sizes in every part of Canada. The FCM speaks for 95% of Canada's urban population from the local government perspective.

The Federation provides a national forum for the exchange of views among elected municipal officials. It represents local government interests both for individual communities and for Canada's municipalities as a whole on the inter-provincial scene and vis-à-vis the federal government. In addition, it provides special representative services for Canada's small and rural communities serving as their guide to the federal government scene and their source of information on national issues.

b) Current Economic Concerns

In times of economic recession, no level of government is harder hit than the municipal level. The FCM recently made representation on behalf of its member municipalities to the federal government on the issue of wage restraint. Elected officials across the country share a mutual concern with meeting increased demands for service while revenues are continually being eroded. Labour relations in general and wage settlements in particular are of acute concern to an increasing number of municipalities.

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1. In the preparation of this submission, the FCM gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Canadian Municipal Personnel Association, the B.C. Public Employers Council, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the City of Ottawa, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Cities of New Brunswick Association and the Municipality of Burnaby.

c) Part-Time Work: The Municipal Perspective

Part-time work is seen in most municipal governments as a necessary means of levelling peaks in the demand for labour in order to deliver services within shrinking budgets. It is from this perspective that municipalities view part-time work issues. Part-time work is not generally looked on in municipalities in its wider social context as an alternate work form.

2. MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND PART-TIME WORK IN CANADA

As it would be expected, it is difficult to generalize about part-time work patterns in municipalities. The numbers and importance of the part-time municipal work force varies dramatically from one community to another within individual provinces and across Canada. The tax base of the community, the age profile and the social fabric of the community, the cost of services and, in many cases, the preferences of local members of councils are key factors in determining the need for and the size of the part-time municipal work force.

a) Seasonal Part-Time Employment

While there has been and is expected to be continued increases in the use of part-time work in other sectors, part-time employment has traditionally been a mainstay in the delivery of services in municipalities. Owing to the nature of some of the services delivered (for example, park maintenance, snow removal, street maintenance and construction, etc.), it has been necessary to augment city staff on a seasonal basis for particular functions. In seasonal employment personnel are retained on a full-time basis for a fixed period - for instance, for the summer season, May to September or the winter season, October to April.

It is estimated that over a calendar year the part-time seasonal employee would not normally work more than a maximum of 900 hours and he or she would, characteristically, be engaged in other activities during the "off season". A typical municipality would, for example, hire high school or university students during the summer to perform recreational functions and these employees would attend classes during the remainder of the year.

b) Extended Hours of Service

In addition to seasonal part-time employment, a second category relates to services provided on an extended hour basis. These might comprise homes for special care, libraries, daycare centres and community centres, for example. These services are provided twelve months of the year and extend beyond normal municipal business hours. For these services, employees are normally retained on a permanent basis for a fixed number of hours to supplement the full-time work force. A typical example in the municipality would be library services that require part-time library workers for approximately 10 to 20 hours a week, all year, to provide extended hours of service. Another example would be community centre security where there is a requirement for part-time employees for several hours, two or three times a week, on a regular basis throughout the year.

c) Special skills

In addition to seasonal and extended hour part-time work, a third category can be distinguished as part-time work requiring special skills. Employees in this category usually perform tasks of a specialized nature for the municipality, usually related to the leisure or recreation program. Examples here would be ski instructors, pottery instructors, playground leaders etc. These employees tend to be high school and university students as well as homemakers and retired people who are unable or unwilling to meet the demands of full-time employment. This type of part-time work may also be seasonal in nature.

The employment of part-time personnel is not an attempt by municipalities to hire inexpensive labour or otherwise avoid the normal costs associated with a full-time work force. Indeed, in many municipalities part-time workers are compensated in excess of minimum provincial standards. Part-time employees are engaged at the municipal level as a necessary element in the provision of a very wide range of municipal services.

3. EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The diversity among Canadian municipalities makes it very

difficult to reflect in a general way the employment status of part-time workers in this country. The conditions of employment, wage and benefit packages vary widely according to the size and revenue base of the municipality.

a) Part-Time Labour and The Unions

A significant portion of municipal part-time employees in large centres are members of established collective bargaining units. Part-time employees, for example, in most of Canada's major municipalities are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

Through union affiliation, part-time workers avail themselves of the opportunities and advantages going with the full-time work force in negotiating rates of pay, fringe benefits and working conditions.

It is now more common for municipal collective agreements to contain definitions of fringe benefit provisions prorated, for example, on the basis of seniority and/or total hours of work.

With the growth in part-time employment it is anticipated that a thrust towards specific recognition and unionization of the part-time work force will continue, if not accelerate, at a rapid pace.

There is an apparent and not unexpected wide variety of practice in the language of municipal collective agreements. Part-time employees, as distinct and separate from full-time employees, are normally defined in terms of "hours worked per week on a regular basis". The actual numbers may vary considerably from one collective agreement to another and are often the product of individual contract negotiations that reflect local market conditions and respective positions of labour and management at the bargaining table. There is no uniformity in the definition of part-time employment status among the municipalities at the provincial or national level.

b) The Small Municipalities

It is important to emphasize that the impact of collective agreements and unionization is felt mainly in the medium and large municipal governments in Canada. In the small municipalities, most municipal services are provided on a

part-time basis by employees who may or may not hold other employment. These employees usually have no union affiliation.

c) The Cost Implications

It is argued by most of the small municipalities and many large ones that attempts to regulate part-time employment by requiring the payment of prorated benefits or specifying the minimum number of hours to be worked would succeed only in raising costs and in turn in reducing the number of part-time employment opportunities offered by the municipality. In many municipalities the feeling is strongly against such action as employees welcome the opportunity to take part-time employment. Often part-time work is by choice but very often it is the only employment available to a large portion of the work force in a small municipality.

4. THE NEED FOR MORE INFORMATION

In canvassing local opinion on the issue of part-time work, it was found that very little has been done to illuminate the issue at the municipal level. This may be partly because of the difficulties assembling information on part-time work patterns in Canada's approximately 5,000 municipalities. The second reason may relate to a lack of urgency on the issue in municipalities. Municipal managers report that issues related to part-time work are on the back burner but have not, as yet, come to the fore.

The notable exception here is in the field of urban transit where the large metropolitan areas are having difficulties providing transit services to accommodate peak-time traffic flows. One reason for the lack of urgency on this issue in local government may result from the fact that part-time work has been on the scene as a regular work form in municipalities for many years. While the emphasis on the social implications of part-time work is gaining currency in the other orders of government, there has been a lag in this perspective in municipalities.

Part-time work is seen more from the employers' perspective as a necessary and cost-effective method of delivering services and managing municipal expenditures. Although some experiments

are taking place with job sharing in some of the large municipalities, part-time work does not tend to be viewed generally in its social context as an alternate work form.

As the issues become known through exercises such as this Inquiry into Part-Time Work, the social implications and the attendant demands from some quarters for increased benefits will, no doubt, reach municipalities.

The crux of the issue is increased costs at a time when tax revenues have little room for expansion and grants and programs from provincial and federal governments are being slashed, leaving the municipalities to meet increasing demands for services with shrinking budgets. One important by-product of this Inquiry has been to point out the need for further examination of the cost implications for municipal governments before precipitous action is taken that may affect part-time work in the municipalities.

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. The diversity in size and orientation of Canadian municipalities makes it difficult to generalize about part-time work patterns at this level in Canada.

2. Not enough specific comparative information is available nationally on part-time work patterns in municipalities in Canada. Information on the extent and nature of the part-time work force, its functions and the various employment conditions and wage and benefit packages, is not readily available.

3. The treatment of the part-time work force varies greatly depending on the size and revenue base of the municipality. In the medium and large municipalities, part-time workers are affected increasingly by collective agreements negotiated for full-time workers. In small municipalities, however, there is little impact on the part-time worker.

4. The issues related to part-time work have not gained wide currency among local governments except in the unionized municipalities. The general perception is that issues are on the back burner for now but will erupt in future.

5. The cost implications of the regulation of part-time work are of concern to municipal management. Attempts to regulate

hours of work or to increase the benefits of the part-time work force are seen to lead to increased costs to municipalities and they are already feeling the economic pinch.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. no regulatory action be taken by provincial or federal governments that would affect part-time work in the municipalities until there has been an opportunity to examine thoroughly the pattern of part-time work as it exists in municipal government across Canada.

2. the Federal Government support the FCM in undertaking an indepth study into part-time work patterns in municipal government. This study would include consultations with municipal employers, provincial labour authorities and the labour unions. Owing to the importance of the issues, the FCM would give priority to this project in its labour relations program.

3. no regulatory action be taken by provincial or federal governments that would affect part-time work in municipalities until there has been an indepth assessment of the cost implications associated with in any way regulating part-time work or requiring increased benefits to be paid to the municipal part-time work force.

4. the Federal Government support the FCM in undertaking an indepth study of the cost implications of regulating part-time work and increasing benefits to part-time workers in Canada's municipalities. Again, the study would include consultations with municipal employers, provincial labour authorities and labour unions.